

Highway 45 SW as Issue Associated with Comprehensive Plan**Late Backup****Summary:**

Highway 45 SW is an example of poor decision making processes that could result in increased long-term tax burdens for COA residents and surrounding communities, environmental degradation, the destruction of cultural heritage, a future city in contradiction to the vision of Imagine Austin, and future litigation associated with development in sensitive areas.

Highway 45 SW does not fit into Imagine Austin and should not be legitimized through inclusion in our long range plan because:

- It would promote sprawl and would work against a compact and connected Austin.
- It does not in any way solve traffic issues on Brodie Lane (CAMPO transportation study).
- It would exacerbate already existing traffic issues on Brodie Lane and Mopac with the potential addition of 30,000 to 50,000 new cars per day on Mopac (CAMPO transportation study).
- It is unfeasible to build the road to meet non-attainment standards for Barton Springs due to costs and area for treatment (TXDoT and COA Watershed Protection Correspondence).
- Task Force and Planning Commission pragmatically considered this issue numerous times with the outcome always to leave the road out.
- Our plan is “consistent” with the CAMPO 2035 plan and it was irresponsible for proponents of the highway to use “fiduciary” responsibility as a scare tactic to get the highway in the plan (CAMPO Staff and Board).
- The plan is an environmental nightmare with more karsts in this area than almost any other area in COA (COA watershed Protection).
- Rainwater from the proposed right of way takes only three days to get to Barton Springs through the aquifer (COA watershed Protection).
- The road could impact drinking water for thousands of people (COA Watershed Protection).

Road from Lazarus

Fritz Steiner has referred to this highway as the road from Lazarus as every time the Citizen Advisory Task Force and the Planning Commission killed it, staff would “raise it from the dead” and put it back in the plan. Three votes were taken regarding the road. The Task Force voted 20 to 6 to have it taken out of the plan. The Planning Commission Committee on the Comprehensive Plan voted twice on whether to have it in the plan and both times voted not to include it. It was brought up multiple other times by staff, all times the overwhelming decision by the task force and planning commission was to keep it out of the plan. Now staff is using their position to bring it before City Council without new evidence.

There is only one western Bridge

Ira Yates has pointed out through graphics and just an understanding of Austin geography, that Southwestern Travis County and beyond—a growing area-- has only one bridge to get to downtown.

That bridge, the Mopac bridge, is already overly congested in peak travel hours. To suggest that we need more traffic coming from the east to the Mopac corridor, potentially bringing from 30,000 to 50,000 cars according to CAMPO estimates, does not sound like a traffic solution but rather a traffic nightmare for Central Texas residents who rely on Mopac. There are at least four other bridges for residents living east of Mopac to get to downtown. — See *Ira Yates Map and CAMPO traffic study for more information.*

Highway 45 SW does not solve the very real Brodie Lane Traffic Problem

Citizens relying on Brodie Lane for daily travel are looking for anything that will make movement in that corridor more effective. They have been promised that Highway 45 could do this. Unfortunately, looking at the traffic modeling numbers put out by CAMPO in response to former Council Member Kim, Highway 45 SW does not solve the Brodie Lane problem. Even with Highway 45 built, traffic congestion on Brodie Lane gets worse over time. It would be like treating the right leg when the left leg is broken. There are solutions for Brodie Lane that are tens of millions of dollars cheaper than building Highway 45 SW. — See *CAMPO memo to Council Member Kim for more information.*

Imagine Austin is Consistent with CAMPO 2035

CAMPO Board Member Jeff Mills pointed out that it is not a one-to-one consistency needed between municipal plans and the CAMPO 2035 plan. Different scales and priorities dictate different plans but the goal would be to have a compatibility that fosters sustainable, fiscally responsible regional patterns. The scare tactic used by some proponents of Highway 45 that the road must be in the plan as our “fiduciary” responsibility is no more than a scare tactic. As pointed out by CAMPO and its board members, every municipal plan created in the area has had some inconsistencies with the CAMPO plans. In addition, actions taken by Travis County and Hays County currently regarding Highway 45 would by a one-to-one definition be considered “inconsistent” with the CAMPO 2035 plan. **CAMPO staff confirmed there has never been a case where CAMPO determined a plan was not “consistent” with the CAMPO plan, nor has there ever been a case where CAMPO withheld federal funds from a member municipality based on something not being in a plan. As CAMPO staff put it: they have never resorted to such “Draconian” steps as to withhold federal funds from a municipality.** This scare tactic in favor of Highway 45 SW is illegitimate and irresponsible. — See *CAMPO Staff and board for more information.*

Cooperating with other Municipalities

The Imagine Austin Plan sought input from numerous municipalities in the area with four active Task Force members representing Travis County’s interests. Proponents of the road suggested we needed the road in the plan because of responsibilities to Hays and Travis County. While the currently elected officials in Hays are proponents of the road, that is not the case in Travis County. In May of 2010, the Travis County Commissioners Court passed a resolution stating that SH 45 SW should be removed from the CAMPO 2035 plan — *Please see Travis County Commissioners Court Agenda #23, May 10, 2010, Removal of SH 45 SW from the CAMPO 2035 Plan for more information.*

In all cases, the City of Austin should look to be good partners with our neighbors but not at an outrageous expense to our vision of a city, our environment, our quality of life, or our long-term viability. Highway 45 SW threatens all these elements and is not good for any of our neighbors’ long-term futures.

The Road Costs Too Much and is Unfunded

The road itself has not been funded and it is unclear where funding would come from at this time. The TIP is for environmental assessment and final engineering. The timeline for construction and allocation

of funding for construction would be somewhere between the years 2020 and 2025 according to the CAMPO 2035 plan. The bottom line is that this road is not yet a reality and we have more important things to spend 70 plus million dollars on. – *Please see CAMPO documents and staff for more information.*

The Myth of the Green Highway

Fritz Steiner, Dean of Architecture at UT, said, “The only way you will make this highway green is if you paint it.” While there are some political movements suggesting we can make this a non-degrading green road, the facts do not support this assertion: Communications between TxDOT and the City of Austin show that TxDOT would not abide by the non-degradation level of water treatment required by the City of Austin. They also show that neither entity could afford this level of treatment. In addition, there is not enough room in the right-of-way to construct the treatment areas necessary.

In addition to the road itself, it would be merely a political guise to suggest we would put a highway in one of the most environmentally sensitive areas in our region and call it green. – *See related correspondence and memos between City of Austin Watershed Protection Department and TxDOT.*

The Road Jeopardizes Drinking Water, Barton Springs, Endangered Species, and Our Quality of Life

- The 1989 EIS performed by TxDOT was based on poor and incomplete science. Rather than the 3 years stated in the report for water to get from the proposed SH 45 SW ROW to Barton Springs, it only takes 2 to 4 days.
 - The proposed SH 45 SW ROW has some of the densest occurrences of karsts within the COA area.
 - The proposed project would put our permit with USFWS for Balcones Canyonlands in jeopardy of non-compliance, which could have huge implications for development in the area.
 - Water Supplies in the area could be negatively affected, including: Shady Hollow, Copper Hills, Southwest Territory and Chaparral Park.
 - The proposed project could have effects on Endangered Species including the Barton Springs Salamander.
 - The City has invested 100s of millions of dollars in the area on mitigation lands for endangered species and water quality. It is clear that Highway 45 SW would degrade the value of this investment.
 - COA Watershed Protection Department has asked TxDOT to be a part of the current EIS to ensure our interests are considered and to make sure TxDOT has the best information available.
- See Watershed Protection Department for more information.*